

We Respond to God's Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

God of life and love, open our eyes and ears to see and hear your message. Open our hearts to embrace one another in our caring. Help us to share joyfully and to receive graciously the gifts we have received from your hand. Guide us to learn to rejoice in you, so we may bear the fruits of joy in everyday life. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen!

SHARING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER/THE LORD'S PRAYER

INVITATION/PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND

OFFERINGS

*DOXOLOGY

UMH 95

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION Unison

We rejoice, O God of peace, in the privilege of giving without worry. You come to us daily with blessings too numerous to count. You are the Holy One whose presence relieves our anxieties, feeds our hungers, and stirs our compassion. Through our offerings, we express our gratitude. As we give of ourselves, we respond to your call to bear fruit and to make your name known among the nations. Thank you for accepting all we offer. Amen!

We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another

*CLOSING HYMN

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

UMH 89 (vs.1 & 2)

*BENEDICTION

Pastor Jenny Lee

POSTLUDE

Upper St. Croix Parish

ONE Parish THREE Churches:

Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls

December 12th, 2021

“Third Sunday of Advent”

“Mitten Tree Sunday” (A)



The United Methodist Church

8:30 AM at Central-Grantsburg with Online Zoom Service

9:45 AM at Atlas

11:15 AM at St. Croix Falls

CONTACT INFORMATION

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www.upperstcroixparish.org

Upper St. Croix Parish
Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls
December 12th, 2021
“Third Sunday of Advent”
“Mitten Tree Sunday”(A)

*Please stand if you are able.

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

BLESSING OF ADVENT CANDLE AND WREATH

ADVANT SONG **TFWS 2090 (vs. 3)**

LIGHTING THE THIRD CANDLE

PASSING OF THE GREETINGS

“Peace be with you”

We Celebrate New Life in Christ

***CALL TO WORSHIP** Responsive

Rejoice, rejoice in the Lord and give thanks to God!

The Holy one is in our midst.

How good it is to come home to God’s house!

How good it is to gather in Christ’s presence!

Sing aloud! Exult with all your heart;

The Sovereign One has done glorious things.

We offer up our anxieties, seeking God’s peace.

We face our plenty, eager to share.

Shout your praise! Express your joy!

The God of our salvation welcomes us.

God’s love is renewing us in these moments;

God’s strength is becoming our song! Amen.

***OPENING HYMN** *Joy to the World* **UMH 246 (vs. 1 &2)**

OPENING PRAYER Unison

God of our baptism, renew in us today the gifts of your Holy Spirit. We have come together, eager for good news. We are here for instructions, ready to do your work in the world. Equip us in this time of worship to draw deeply from the waters of salvation. Fill us with your love that we may pass it

on. Recall us to truth and excellence and justice in all we say and do. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

CHILDREN’S TIME

UHM 191 (vs. 1)

Proclamation of God’s Word

***THE GOSPEL LESSON**

Luke 3:7-18

7 John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

10 And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” 11 In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” 13 He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” 14 Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

15 As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, 16 John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

18 So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

This is the word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

SERMON

“Bear the fruits of Joy!”

Pastor Jenny Lee

CHURCH MISSIONS



ATLAS...December

<p>INK JET RECYCLING PROGRAM:</p> <p>Atlas collects and recycles ink jet cartridges and cell phones year round.</p> 	<p>Christmas Special Offering ...</p> <p>10% of our tithe will go to support the St. Croix Falls and Luck school back-pack program...let us all give thanks! Envelopes will be available in the church entry for this offering.</p>	<p>Mitten Tree</p>  <p>We will collect mittens, scarves, hats, gloves, etc. Our donations will be taken to Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry.</p>
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GRANTSBURG...December

<p>BE A "BACK-PACK BACKER"!</p> <p>REMEMBER ... Every Sunday Is MAC 'N CHEESE SUNDAY! Supporting the Salvation Army's "Happy Kids Back-Pack Program"</p> 	<p>Christmas for Kids Interfaith Caregivers</p>  <p>This program helps families with limited income provide a gift for their children. We are requesting financial donations this year-we are collecting the first two Sundays of December. Thank you for your generosity.</p>
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ST. CROIX FALLS...December

 <p>Food Shelf</p> <p>(Communion Sunday)</p>	<p>Sailor Hat Offering:</p>  <p>Christmas Gift Cards to those in need.</p>
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TODAY'S SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Ministers All God's People
Pastor Jenny Lee

Today's Service

Central:

Pianist	Toni Koons
Liturgist	Barb Loomis
Snow Removal	Stan Chute
Acolyte(s)	Willow Erickson
Fellowship	Art and Pauline Bistram
Counter	Volunteer Needed
Sunday School	Younger/Older
	LuAnne Martell/Barb Loomis

Atlas:

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Sue Olson
Usher(s)	Colleen Adams-Schween
Cleaning	Volunteer Needed
Sunday School	Younger/Older
	Christmas Rehearsal

St. Croix Falls:

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Jim Andrews
Usher(s)	Karen Sciacca
Money Counter	Peter Gionis
Flowers	Kathy Gionis
Fellowship	Ad Council members



BREAKTHROUGH PRAYERS FOR THIS WEEK:
"This kind can come out only by prayer" (Mark 9:29)
 Please pray every morning at 8:30, if it is possible!

1) Pray for Donna Shogren (Donna Norman's Grandmother) who is in the ICU with COVID at St. Mary's Hospital

PLEASE NOTE:

- 1) An Online Zoom Service is scheduled for this Sunday at 8:30 am. The link will be posted on our parish website and Facebook page. Click the LINK to Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84147808460?pwd=SDZlZFNummEvaDBlcytTRzVxMFIIZz09>
Phone: +1 312 626 6799,
Meeting ID: 841 4780 8460, Passcode: 568271
- 2) Our Sunday Sermons are on the website at upperstcroixparish.org under Sermons!
- 3) You can hear "the service by Phone," whenever you are able by calling 1-715-298-0854.
- 4) You may watch a recorded video of the service on our parish Facebook page.
<https://www.facebook.com/UpperStCroixParishUMC>

This Week's Calendar:

Today: "Third Sunday of Advent." May God bring us joy! God bless you all!

Sunday Worship Service:

8:30 am Grantsburg
9:45 am Atlas "Mitten Tree Sunday"
11:15 am St. Croix Falls

- 12/15: 1pm, UMW Christmas Tea Party(G)
2pm, Craft Group gathers in Central-Grantsburg. They will learn how to make prayer shawls. We welcome everyone.
4:30pm, Go Fish for Kids (G)
6:30pm, Confirmation Class (G)
- 12/16: 9am, North West Clergy Meeting via Zoom
4pm, Ad Council Meeting via Zoom (SCF)
- 12/18: 8:30pm, Parish Youth Group Christmas Light Night (Miracle at Big Rock) Reservation to Shayna Schmid (920-312-2857) by Dec. 13.

This Week's Birthdays and Anniversaries:

Adalyn Snyder	12/12
Copelan Grimes	12/13
Jeff Tooze	12/13



Next Sunday (December 19th) Volunteers:

Ministers	All God's People Pastor Jenny Lee
Central:	
Pianist	Toni Koons
Liturgist	Volunteer Needed
Snow Removal	Stan Chute
Acolyte(s)	Willow Erickson
Fellowship	Paulie Kratchmer
Counter	Volunteer Needed
Sunday School	Younger/Older LuAnne Martell/ Barb Loomis

Atlas:	
Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Colleen Adams-Schween
Usher(s)	Volunteer Needed
Cleaning	Volunteer Needed
Sunday School	Younger/Older Christmas Program

St. Croix Falls:

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Jim Andrews
Usher(s)	Karen Sciacca
Money Counter	Peter Gionis
Flowers	Kathy Gionis
Fellowship	Ad Council Member (3rd Sunday)



- 12/19: CHRISTMAS PROGRAM (A)**
- 12/24: CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE**
1 PM, ST. CROIX FALLS
4PM, ATLAS
7PM, CENTRAL-GRANTSBURG
- 12/25: MERRY CHRISTMAS!**



December 12th, 2021.
Luke 3:7-18

Pastor Jenny Lee, Ph.D.
Upper St. Croix Parish UMC

“Bear Fruits of Joy!”

I want to start with something funny. I learned this story from an internet site. Three men died in a car accident on Christmas Eve. They all found themselves at the Pearly Gates waiting to enter heaven. Upon entering, they must present something relating to, or associated with Christmas. The first man searched his pocket and found some mistletoe, so he was allowed in. The second man showed a cracker, so he was also allowed in. The third man pulled out a pair of stockings. Confused at this last gesture, God asked him, “How do these represent Christmas?” He answered, “They’re Carol’s.”

It is a joke, but hearing this joke, I wonder if we are ready for God, for Christmas, and for the coming of Jesus. A few years ago, I got a Christmas cactus. As you may know, the Christmas cactus begins flowering during the Advent season, and around Christmas Day, it comes in full bloom. It encourages everyone who sees it to cheer up and feel joyous. I wonder how the cactus knows it is the Christmas season. The Christmas cactus reminds me that it is the season to prepare for Jesus.

It’s the third Sunday of Advent. We lit the third Advent candle today, hoping Jesus brings us joy. But, I wonder if we give joy to God and if we bear fruits of joy for God. One of my favorite scripture is Philippians. The Letter of Philippians was written by Apostle Paul while in prison. He was persecuted and imprisoned because of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, he says, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near” (Philippians 4:4-5). While he was imprisoned because of Jesus Christ the Lord, he recommended that the people “rejoice in the Lord.” How was he able to do so? If we have a God-centered mind, we may rejoice in all circumstances. If we trust in God, who will handle everything in our lives, we may not worry about our livelihood, but rejoice in the Lord always. The Apostle Paul says, “Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7). If we indeed trust in God, we may pray in thanksgiving, and live in joy in all circumstances. Do you know what the opposite meaning of “faith” is? It is “worry.” The reason we worry, is because we do not have faith in God. Trust in God, turn all your worries over to God, and always rejoice in the Lord.

In today’s scripture, John the Baptist says to the people who want to be baptized, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves; we have Abraham as our ancestor; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham” (Luke 3:7b-8). Jewish people thought that they were the chosen people because they were descendants of Abraham. But, John the Baptist emphasizes that all humans became sinners since Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent in the Garden of Eden. God chose Abraham only by God’s grace because God is almighty. God can make the descendants of Abraham from stones. John the Baptist may say to us today. If we, Christians think of Christian’s privilege like the Jewish thought of their privilege, it is a big misunderstanding of God’s will. It is true that we are the chosen people. But, it is not because of

our ability. It is only by God's grace. Therefore, we should be humble and gentle on God's work. We may get a sense of what is God's work from today's scripture.

When John the Baptist says, "every tree that does not bear fruits is cut down and throw into the fire" (John 3:9). People ask him, "What should we do?" John the Baptist says, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise" (3:11). The work of God is to share what we have already with those who have none. In other words, bearing fruits of joy is to share what we received from God with those who have not received it yet. John the Baptist says to the tax collector, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." And, he says to soldiers, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation." For the leaders, to bear fruits is to do justice and walk with God humbly. It is God's work at their position. We can practice God's work in everyday life. Jesus' greatest commandment is to love God and love our neighbors. If we practice loving God and loving one another, people may know that we are Christians by our acts. In other words, if we share ours with one another, we may know joy in the Lord. There is a saying, "if you share joy, your joy will double; if you share your sadness, your sadness will be cut in half." Therefore, we do share our joys and concerns during service. Let us practice God's work in everyday life.

We can find an example of a joyful work of God from the story of the Samaritan woman. You may know about the woman of Samaria at the well (John 4:4:1-34). When Jesus and his disciples came to the city of Samaria, they were tired out by their journey and wanted to take a rest nearby Jacob's well. His disciples went into the city to get some food, and Jesus was sitting near the well. A woman came to the well to get water, and Jesus asked her for water. At the time, Jewish men never talked with Samaritans. The woman was surprised at Jesus' asking her. However, she finally realized he is the Messiah. She believed in Jesus the Messiah and went into the city to spread the good news, leaving her jar at the well, saying, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" Her shouting must have been full of joy. When the disciples returned, they told Jesus, "Rabbi, eat something." But, Jesus said to them, "I have food to eat that you don't know about." The disciples talked to each other, "Who gave him food?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work." Jesus was very tired from his journey, but he saved a woman. Jesus cheered up again without food because he got joy from the work of God. The work of God should make us cheer up with joy, not make us burn out. But, we know that we sometimes feel a burden in God's work and feel tired, and it causes miscommunication, frustration, and anger.

Furthermore, it leads us to hurt one another. So, if you feel a burden, please pause there, and take a break and pray. If we really want to bring peace and harmony, help the family and the church with gentleness. Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near" (Philippians 4:4-5). If we focus on God's will, we should be gentle. But if we focus on our goals or ourselves, we may fuss about it. We should rejoice in God's ministry because "rejoicing" in the Lord is God's will. The Apostle Paul says, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

In this advent season, we may learn to rejoice in the Lord. Joy isn't joy until we express it. Let us express joyfully in the Lord. Let us share the good news and bear fruits joyfully in this season. Perhaps, Christmas season is the most joyous season of the year. May this Christmas be the most Merry Christmas to all of you! Thanks be to God. Amen.